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ABSTRACT

The results of a study designed to develop an understanding of the background characteristics, motivations, and experiences of students enrolled in summer school at the University of Alberta, are presented. A questionnaire developed to gather information on personal characteristics; academic factors; enrollment motivations; and administrative, resource, and course experiences was administered to 418 students in 18 classes in the faculties of arts and education. Findings included the following: two-thirds were 23 or older, female, and residing in Edmonton; slightly more than half of the respondents reported full-time student status for occupation; the most frequently reported motivations for registering for summer courses were to speed up degree completion and/or to ease course load during the regular term; and students were generally satisfied with their experiences relating to administrative matters. Recommendations included: expansion of courses to aid in acceleration of degree completion; expansion of variety of course offerings; offering courses with a pre-session study component; offering professional development for instructors in adult instruction; and initiating systematic evaluation of spring and summer sessions to establish a data base for planning. Five appendices are: a list of departments participating in the study; the survey instrument; an information letter to faculty members and letter from the Director of Special Sessions; the student volunteer form; and the interview consent form. Contains 13 references. (SM)

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Summer Session Learning Experiences at the University of Alberta

A Report For

The Western Association of Summer Session Administrators

by

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August 1989

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Foreword

Traditionally, Summer Session courses were offered to meet the needs of the public education system (upgrading of teachers) and students who required courses because they had failed one, dropped one or could not accommodate a full course load during the regular academic year. In recent years, this situation has changed dramatically. Summer Sessions are now an important component of a university's year round operations. The traditional student has been displaced by a new and different type of summer student. Students enrolled in summer programs today are heterogeneous. They vary greatly in age, faculty, goals, needs, and interests. University policies, administrators, and instructors have not always kept pace with the changing clientele.

This study was designed to develop an understanding of the background characteristics, motivations and experiences of students enrolled in a large public university located in a major metropolitan centre. The project was carried out by Drs. Paula Brook, Don Chapman and Peter Wright, all from the Department of Adult, Career and Technology Education at the University of Alberta Faculty of Education.

No project is ever complete without the assistance and support of many others. In addition to the faculty and students who participated in the study, we were fortunate to work with capable graduate students--Susie Devins, Sara Gnida, Ann Lind, and Barb Schur. A special word of appreciation goes to Jack Mauch, Chair of the W.A.S.S.A. Research Committee and Lloyd Carswell, Director of Special Sessions at the University of Alberta for their continued encouragement and support. Much of the success of this report belongs to Dr. Nand Kishor of Simon Fraser University for assistance with the final report and for computer programming and statistical analyses (several times over). And lastly, we sincerely acknowledge the support and assistance of our chairman, Dr. Abram G. Konrad.

Paula A. Book
Don Chapman
Peter Wright

Edmonton Alberta
August 1989

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Executive Summary

This report is the outcome of a research project sponsored by the Western Association of Summer Session Administrators (W.A.S.S.A.). The purpose of the project was to explore the experiences, motivations, and characteristics of students who enroll in university summer session courses. Three researchers at the University of Alberta conducted the study in the summer of 1988.

A questionnaire was developed to gather information on personal characteristics, academic factors, enrollment motivations, and administrative, resource and course experiences. A total of 418 questionnaires were administered to 18 classes in the Faculties of Arts and Education. In addition, two focus group interviews were conducted to complement the questionnaire data.

General findings and discussion of the study are reported according to the questionnaire design.

Student Profile

An examination of the personal and academic characteristics of the respondents revealed that approximately two-thirds were age 23 or older, female, and residing in Edmonton. Slightly more than one-half reported full-time student status for their occupation. A larger proportion of undergraduates than graduates were represented, with 18% registered as unclassified students. Although the study was conducted in the Faculties of Arts and Education, the largest group of participants (40%) were registered in faculties **other** than these two. One-third of the students surveyed were attending university for the first time. Of those students who were enrolled in Summer Session, many (55 %) committed themselves to two or more 3 week courses.

Enrollment Information

In response to questions about their reasons for registering for a summer course, the most frequently reported motivations were to speed up degree completion and/or to ease course load during the regular term. Because respondents are mature students (23 or over) and not working, they can manage personal and academic roles and responsibilities while striving for their goals.

Experiences

Students are generally satisfied with their experiences relating to administrative matters, access to resources and course issues. They would like a greater variety of courses to choose from, and their preference would be for program related courses. Some significant relationships exist between student characteristics and level of satisfaction on specific experiences.

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Chapter 1
Design and Methodology

At the University of Alberta, as at most other universities, very little data exist in relation to course offerings held in spring or summer. Data which do exist are either administrative or relate to student demographics. Information which attests to the effectiveness of summer programming or to the perceptions and experiences of students and instructors is either sparse, or has not been collected systematically. As a consequence, insufficient data exist upon which to plan, deliver, and administer summer courses.

Based on issues raised in the literature and the specific situation at the University of Alberta, a research project was undertaken to gather information about summer programs from the learners' perspective.

Study Purposes

The objectives of this project were to explore the effectiveness of summer session programming as seen through the experiences of the participants. Specifically, the study explored two questions:

- **What motivates students to register in summer courses?**
- **What are their experiences in Summer Session?**

These questions were examined against the personal and academic characteristics of the students.

As a case study, this project is an initial attempt to examine the relationships between administrative and programming decisions and student needs and interests in summer classes.

Data Collection

Sample. The University of Alberta is a public institution located in Edmonton, Alberta. The University's academic year consists of two, separately administered sessions, the Winter Session and Special Sessions. The Winter Session is divided into two terms, First Term (September to December) and Second Term (January to April). Special Sessions offers courses throughout the year and is the primary provider of courses during Spring Session (May and June) and Summer Session (July and August). As with the Winter session, Spring and Summer Session are each divided into two terms of three weeks each. This project focused exclusively on Summer Session.

Approximately 250 courses were offered during the 1988 Summer Session. Of these 250 courses, a total of 168 were offered by the Faculties of Arts and Education. Due to the large

proportion of courses offered by these two faculties, and the concomitant large number of students, it was decided to survey students in these faculties. Also, the Faculty of Arts represents a wide variety of courses of general relevance for many degree programs across the University. The Faculty of Education was chosen for its large number of course offerings (second only to the Faculty of Arts) and because it represents a summer program for teachers (historically one of the groups served by universities during summer programming).

The vast majority of the 168 Arts and Education course offerings were three week, three credit courses (half courses at this University). Typically, the format for such courses is a two hour and twenty minute class each day for fifteen consecutive weekdays; a total instructional time of approximately 33 hours (not including lab time where relevant).

Twenty courses were selected at random; 18 participated in the study. Two instructors chose not to allow the researchers to administer the survey in class with the explanation being that course time was too brief in summer session as it was. All but one of the 18 courses were of the three week, three credit type with the exception being a full (six week, six credit) course. Course enrollment ranged from 11 to 93 students.

Table 1.1 shows the courses and their academic level.

Table 1.1
Number and Level of Courses in Study

Faculty	# of Courses at Level				Totals
	200	300	400	500	
Arts	4	9	0	0	13
Education	0	0	2	3	5
Totals	4	9	2	3	18

Course numbers at the 200 to 400 level represent undergraduate offerings; a 500 level course is a graduate course.

Thirteen departments (4 in Education and 9 in Arts) were represented in the study (Appendix A). Table 1.2 shows the distribution of participants by faculty and course level.

Table 1.2
Number of Students by Course Level

Faculty	# of Students by Course Level				Totals
	200	300	400	500	
Arts	110	248	0	0	358
Education	0	0	20	40	60
Totals	110	248	20	40	418

The majority of participants in this study were enrolled in 300 level courses in the Arts Faculty. The Education Faculty was represented by 4th and 5th year students.

Methodology

Instrumentation. Data were gathered by two methods, a survey questionnaire and focus group interviews. Four hundred and eighteen questionnaires were completed and returned. Thirteen students participated in the focus group interview sessions held after the completion of each term.

An 82 question instrument (Appendix B) was developed to gather data about student characteristics, enrollment information, and program experiences. Part I of the questionnaire was subdivided into two categories: demographic and academic information. Questions asked about age, gender, residence, occupation, work commitment, and registration status. Part II asked about motivations for summer session registration and reasons for dropping a course(s) in a previous Spring or Summer Session (if applicable). Responses were of a "Yes - No" nature. Part III of the questionnaire explored experiences of students during Summer Session. Specifically, questions related to administration of courses, access to resources and other course related experiences. A five point Likert scale was used to measure student experiences, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

The questionnaire was field tested with a class of Education graduate students in Spring Session. Some modifications were made in the wording and organization as a result of feedback. In addition, the Director of Special Sessions was asked to respond to the instrument on two occasions: during initial development and during the field testing. His comments were incorporated into the final instrument.

The second major data collection activity used in this study was the focus group interview. A focus group interview typically involves from four to twelve respondents who share a particular characteristic (such as attending university during summer) and is used rather than individual interviews in order to gather a wider range of information in a short period of time. According to O'Donnel (1988), the focus group "encourages greater spontaneity and candor, fewer inhibitions, and greater anonymity and security" than the individual interview (p.71). Bers & Smith (1987) suggest that focus group interviews, as a "qualitative method," may have utility in supplementing quantitative data by providing an indepth understanding of the perspectives of respondents.

Two focus group interviews were used in this study to complement the survey data. Interviews were conducted a few days after each of the three week sessions (one in late July and one in the 3rd week of August). The two interviews involved a total of 13 respondents. Respondents were offered no inducements to volunteer.

Administration of the Study. Participation in the research by both instructors and students was voluntary. Key steps in the administration of the project were as follows:

1) Initial contact was made with the course instructors through a letter of information in April, 1988 (Appendix C). This communication, which was accompanied by a letter of support from the Director of Special Sessions (Appendix C), described the purpose of the research and elicited the cooperation of instructors. As well, instructors were informed that they would be contacted by telephone to confirm a date and time of a proposed class visit.

2) A follow up telephone call was made by the principal researchers or a project assistant to confirm the date and time of the proposed class visit. This call was made approximately two to three weeks after the initial letter was mailed. Questions or concerns regarding the project were discussed in this call. Particular attention focused on the fact that course evaluation was not the purpose of the research.

3) Class visits were made at the arranged time and date to administer the instrument. The nature and purpose of the research was explained to students. Also, during this visit and before the instruments were distributed, those students who were interested in providing additional information about their experiences were invited to complete a volunteer form indicating their willingness to participate in a focus group interview after the completion of their courses (Appendix D). Class visits were generally conducted at the beginning of a class session near the end of term (e.g., three or four days before the end of a three week, three credit course). This point in time was chosen so as to gain maximum input from student experiences yet minimize any

potential conflict with student assessment procedures (final examinations in particular). Approximately 15-20 minutes was required for each class visit.

4) Volunteer forms (Appendix D) were used to solicit potential participants for the focus group interviews at the time of instrument administration. A choice of two interview times was offered. The time most frequently identified as first choice by students was selected for the interview. All potential volunteers were contacted by telephone and invited to attend.

Two members of the research team were present at each interview session, one to facilitate the discussion, the other to operate the audio equipment and to take notes. At each interview, the participants were once again provided with a description of the study and asked to sign a consent form (Appendix E). There were no withdrawals from the interviews.

The following general topic areas were used to focus and guide the discussion during the group interviews: reasons for volunteering to be interviewed; registration experiences in Summer Session; scheduling issues; benefits gained from attending Summer Session; and suggestions for improvement. Each interview session was tape recorded for subsequent transcription and analysis.

Overview of the Report

In the first chapter, an overview of the study has been provided. Chapter 2 summarizes selected literature related to the delivery of summer programming and to student participation. Chapters 3 and 4 discuss the findings and analyses of the data, with particular reference to the major purposes of the study. In the final chapter, a summary of the findings and recommendations is offered regarding summer programming.

Chapter 2
Literature Review

Although summer courses and programs have been offered for many years in universities, there is a paucity of research and information regarding the planning and delivery of such programs. This chapter reviews previous work in the areas relating to the administration and characteristics of summer programs, including student characteristics.

Factors that Influence Programming

The offering of summer programs is an accepted and important component in most North American universities. There are a variety of reasons for this. For example, in the United States enrollments of typical 18-25 year old college and university students have declined; as a consequence, some universities have maintained or expanded their numbers by appealing to nontraditional students through summer session courses.

Norris and Poulton (1987: 55) suggest that the growth in summer sessions may also result from a change in academic programming. According to the authors, the emphasis in summer session planning is shifting from specific content or discipline programming to a number of other concerns: the needs and interests of learners, the management of human and capital resources for program delivery, and the evaluation of program outcomes or "quality."

These changes are echoed by O'Fallon (1985) who suggests that the most important characteristic of summer programming is "the academic and administrative flexibility of typical summer sessions" manifested in "innovative courses..., admissions policies which allow for the nontraditional student, and academic calendars that serve the students and not merely adhere to tradition" (p.35).

Young and McDougall (1982; 1985; 1988), who studied both U.S. and Canadian universities, found that summer session activities included a variety of offerings: (a) courses held at off-campus locations convenient for students, (b) foreign travel programs, (c) programs cooperating with business, industry or government, and (d) special programs for women and senior citizens. In addition, enrollment increases were noted for the sciences, humanities and professional schools (business and engineering)--traditionally not major players in summer session programming.

Jenkins (1985), in an examination of one of the earliest providers of summer courses, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, found that the emergence of the summer program apparently was partly a response to a perceived need for high school teachers to receive additional training in the sciences. The program also served other nontraditional students. Specifically, two characteristics of the summer session Jenkins (1985) noted were "high quality teaching and public

service programming in response to the summertime needs of continuing degree candidates and others" (p.19).

Student Characteristics

According to Keller (1982), "summer programs also have historically appealed to students who want to expedite their academic progress or desire to attend school at a time when classes are likely to be smaller and instructors presumably more able to provide individual attention" (p.348). Other important reasons for enrollment are: to accelerate progress towards a degree, to pursue additional courses in a major field of study, to maintain or upgrade professional competence, to broaden electives (or upgrade deficiencies in electives), to lighten a regular term academic load, to work closely with an instructor, and to concentrate on fewer courses (undivided attention) (Keller, 1982; McLeRoy, 1985; Schoenfeld, 1985).

However, in looking at factors which may influence student participation in summer courses, Keller (1982), in a study of Miami University summer session, notes that "environmental factors" (e.g., smaller classes, fewer students) were of less impact than either economic or curricular factors (degree acceleration, employment opportunities). Academic reasons were more important for graduate students than for undergraduates (Schoenfeld, 1985).

Looking at student characteristics, Schoenfeld (1985) reported that summer students tend to be more serious about their studies than students attending regular sessions. They are apparently more likely to be married and in graduate school; presumably, therefore, they are older, with stronger motivation and with clearer goals.

Programming Issues

Overall, there is agreement in the literature that summer sessions appeal to special interest groups and that the summer session offerings are an important component of university offerings. Young & McDougall (1985; 1988) argue however, that the degree of integration of the summer session programs in the institution's ongoing program and degree of representation in the institution's central purpose is often unclear. In fact, many institutions do not have a clear statement of the role and purpose for their summer session administrative units. Schmidt (1985) appears to concur with this assessment, encouraging institutions to develop a mission statement for their summer programming.

As the demand for summer programming increases, and as institutions respond, Samson (1985: 47) suggests six areas of attention that will require attention and/or clarification: (a) mission and goals for higher education; (b) administration and governance; (c) delivery of instruction; (d) innovation and experimentation; (e) relationship to the conventional academic year; and (f) the role of the summer dean/director.

The future status of summer programming will depend on many factors, some of which are only briefly discussed in this chapter. As noted earlier, there is a paucity of research and information about summer programs, at least as reported in the literature. What is available relates to types of offerings and student characteristics. Only recently has the emphasis begun to shift to other areas (Norris and Poulton, 1987; Samson 1985).

One area where research is beginning to focus is on program outcome or "quality." Although "quality" is a vague concept, with various interpretations, perspectives, and criteria, the concept will, according to Apps (1988), become an increasingly important issue, especially in higher education programs. Pratt (1980) suggests three criteria for evaluating the quality of programs: effectiveness, acceptability and efficiency.

Effectiveness can be measured by whether the objectives of the course are met by the learners, for example, in grades and job performance; however, dropout rate, unanticipated outcomes, and relative effectiveness should also be taken into consideration. Acceptability involves student and instructor satisfaction with the course: "A program that achieves all of its objectives may still be judged a failure if the people involved disliked the experience" (Pratt, 1980; 425). Efficiency refers to the "production of output relative to input of energy and resources" (p. 421).

Although the purpose of this project was not to evaluate summer session programs, courses, instructors, or students, it was the explicit intention to gather data related to the experiences (satisfaction) of students in key areas: administration, resources, and classes. As such, this study represents a contribution to the literature on summer session evaluation.

Summary

This chapter reviewed the literature on summer session programming, pointing out the limited number and scope of articles in this area. Generally, programs and courses offered during summer are designed for specific target groups. Students who register for summer classes tend to be highly motivated and older. As reported in the literature, most universities have not articulated clearly the role and nature of units which administer summer programming.

Chapter 3
Summer Session Experiences

The purpose of this study was to explore the effectiveness of summer programming as seen through the experiences of participants. The consideration of student motivations and experiences acknowledges that those who attend have impressions, reasons, and responses that influence their perceptions of the effectiveness of summer programs, and that decision-makers could benefit from knowing students' experiences.

This chapter presents the findings of the questionnaire which explored student characteristics, enrollment motivations, and experiences related to administration, resources and courses.

Data Analyses

Questionnaires were coded to facilitate data entry and statistical analysis using SPSSX. A five digit code was employed for identification of Faculty (Arts or Education) and course level (200, 300, 400, or 500). This coding procedure did not permit the association of questionnaires with any students who completed them; anonymity was thus guaranteed.

The data were input by the Division of Educational Research Services at the University of Alberta. Verification of the input was undertaken by them and then crosschecked by selecting 10 subjects and matching the coded data to the original instrument responses. No errors were found.

The survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (means, percentages, and frequencies). Crosstabulation analyses were performed to explore relationships between and among selected variables. Qualitative data from the focus group interviews were transcribed and analyzed for comments which complemented the questionnaire.

This section of the report is structured in accordance with the major headings of the questionnaire. Under each heading is a brief description of the section, its subsections and the nature of the response required. A brief discussion of the findings is presented, with data summarized in tables. Interpretation and discussion of the findings are based on mean scores or percentages.

Part I--Background Information

In this section of the instrument, information about respondent demographic characteristics and academic status was gathered. Specifically, respondents were asked about their age, gender, permanent residence, occupation, employment status and registration status.

Responses across questions and categories are summarized in Table 3.1. Number of responses in each category and the valid percentages are reported. Due to missing data and

rounding of numbers, some category totals may not equal 100%. For convenience of reporting, some questions appearing in the tables are abbreviated versions of those which appear on the instrument.

An examination of demographic data reveals that the majority of summer session participants are nontraditional students, i.e., 23 years of age or older (67.1%) --what are known as adult students. The majority (68.8%) of respondents were female and most (65.4%) lived in the city of Edmonton.

Regarding occupation, teachers no longer are the primary participants in Summer Session courses. For this study, the majority (51.0%) were full time students, with teachers in the next highest category (22.1%). The work commitment confirms full time attendance; 64.4% of participants were either on leave from their positions or reported "not working."

Undergraduates are clearly the primary participants in summer courses (59.7%), with unclassified status being the next largest group of students (17.5%). (At the University of Alberta, unclassified students are defined as students who are registered in selected credit courses but who are not admitted to a degree or diploma program.) Although the courses in this project were offered by the Faculties of Arts and Education, the largest group of participants (40%) were not registered in either of these two faculties. Arts was represented by 36.6% of the respondents with education majors comprising 18.9%. More than two-thirds (69%) of the respondents had been full or part-time students during the Second Term of the previous Winter Session.

The last four questions in this section asked about registration in Spring Session (May-June) and Summer Session (July-August) courses of a 3 or 6 credit nature. Three credit courses predominate on the University of Alberta campus. Although 48.7% took no 3 credit Spring course, 31.3% of students registered in two or more of these intense, 3 week courses. In Summer Session, the majority (54.7%) of students again were registered in two or more 3 credit courses. Perhaps the abbreviated format of this type course (3 weeks) allows a greater number of credit hours to be gained by students, especially when almost half (48.7%) of students chose not to register in Spring Session, yet had been full time students in the Winter Session (54.1%).

Six credit courses are not as numerous as the 3 credit ones as evidenced by the fact that 91.5% of respondents did not register in one and only 7.5% were registered in a single, 6 credit course in Spring Session. Summer Session statistics are similar, only 4.1% of students surveyed had registered in one 6 credit course.

Table 3.1

Demographic and Academic Information

		N	Percentage
Demographic Information			
1.	Age		
	18-22 years	134	32.1
	23-30	138	33.1
	31-40	91	21.8
	41-50	50	12.0
	> 50	4	1.0
2.	Gender		
	female	287	68.8
	male	130	31.2
3.	Residence		
	Edmonton	272	65.4
	Commuting distance	57	13.7
	Beyond commuting	87	20.9
4.	Occupation		
	Student	212	51.0
	Teaching	92	22.1
	Other	60	14.4
	Business or Industry	30	7.2
	Government	12	2.9
	Homemaker	10	2.4
5.	Work commitment		
	not working	160	38.3
	on leave	109	26.1
	1 -20 hrs.	68	16.3
	20-35 hrs.	49	11.7
	> 35 hrs. per week	32	7.7
Academic Information			
6.	Registration status		
	Graduate student	31	7.4
	Visiting graduate student	5	1.2
	Diploma student	15	3.6
	Undergraduate	249	59.7
	Visiting Undergraduate	11	2.6
	Special	32	7.7
	Unclassified	73	17.5
	Audit	1	0.2
7.	Faculty		
	Arts	153	36.6
	Education	79	18.9
	Graduate Studies	19	4.5
	Other	167	40.0
8.	Registration status (Winter term)		
	Full time	225	54.1
	Part-time	62	14.9
	Not registered	129	31.0
9.	Spring session 3 credit courses		
	none	202	48.7
	one	83	20.0
	two	113	27.2
	> two	17	4.1
10.	Summer session 3 credit courses		
	none	15	3.6
	one	174	41.7
	two	209	50.1
	> two	19	4.6
11.	Spring session 6 credit courses		
	none	378	91.5
	one	31	7.5
	two	3	0.7
	> two	1	0.2
12.	Summer session 6 credit courses		
	none	395	95.6
	one	17	4.1
	two	1	0.2

Overall then, the typical Summer Session student is a mature undergraduate female, who lives in the city, is a full time student and does not work. She is a major in a Faculty other than Arts or Education, would have been a full time student in the Winter Session, would have taken the Spring Session "off" from classes, registering in Summer Session for two 3-credit courses.

Her expectations and experiences regarding Summer Session are reported in the next two sections.

Part II--Enrollment Information

In this section of the instrument, registration motivations and reasons for dropping courses were explored. A summary of responses is reported in Table 3.2, with the number of responses and percentage ranked from high to low. Responses were recorded either "yes" or "no. The number of the question on the survey instrument is listed to the left of each statement.

As can be seen from Table 3.2, only two items received a majority of "Yes" responses regarding reasons for course registration. The two most popular reasons for enrollment in Summer Session were Q.13, to speed up degree completion (71.7%) and Q.17, to ease course load during the regular session (52.0%). These findings are consistent with the literature reviewed.

Other reasons for registration of some importance include: Q.23, to focus attention on one course (46.0%); Q.21, enjoyment of the learning experience (37.7%); and Q.28, for other reasons not listed (23.9%).

The reasons for Summer Session registration which received the least number of "Yes" responses were: to take a course from a visiting instructor (Q.27, 7%); because I was unable to gain entrance to the course during regular term (Q.26, 2.5%); and to take a course from a particular instructor (Q.19, 5.0%).

An analysis of motivating factors is interesting when one considers the total situation. The typical student desires to speed up her degree, yet ease course load, had been enrolled full time during the Second Term of the previous Winter Session, and registered for 2 or more Summer Session courses because she took the Spring Session off from studies.

Table 3.2
Enrollment Information
(N= 418)

Reasons for Course Registration		Yes		No	
		N	%	N	%
13.	Speed up degree	296	71.7	117	28.3
17.	Ease course load	212	52.0	196	48.0
23.	To focus attention	186	46.0	218	54.0
21.	Enjoy learning experience	152	37.7	251	62.3
28.	Other reasons	95	23.9	303	76.1
20.	Maintain continuity	81	20.2	320	79.8
14.	Pick up dropped course	58	14.4	346	85.6
18.	Expected small class	48	12.0	353	88.0
16.	Course only offered then	37	9.2	363	90.7
22.	Take elective course	37	9.2	363	90.7
24.	Make up U of A program deficiencies	33	8.2	369	91.8
25.	Make up other program deficiencies	29	7.2	372	92.8
15.	Pick up failed course	28	7.0	374	93.0
19.	Take a particular instructor	20	5.0	382	95.0
26.	Unable to gain entrance	10	2.5	391	97.5
27.	Take a visiting professor	3	0.7	397	99.2

Or stated another way, she wants to ease the regular term course load of her degree program which she is trying to complete in less than the normal time period. Yet she chooses not to register for courses on a 12-month basis, preferring a semester off (Spring Session) and a heavy course load (two courses) during Summer Session. All this is possible in her life, according to inferences from this study, because she is a mature student who isn't working. Thus, she evidently knows how to manage time, academic, and other responsibilities and is goal oriented (degree completion as quickly as possible).

In Table 3.3, information about previous attendance and withdrawal from Spring/Summer courses is presented.

Of those participating in the study, 180 (or 43.1%) had attended a spring or summer course previously. Forty-two (or 18.5%) had previously dropped a spring or summer session course.

Conversely, the majority had not attended spring or summer prior to 1988 (56.9%) nor had dropped a spring or summer course (80.6%).

The most frequently cited reasons for dropping Spring or Summer Session courses were personal reasons (57.5%) or because they felt there was insufficient time for required course reading (53.7%). The category "other reasons" was a close third (44.7%) with factors relating to course pace and difficulty receiving 42.1% and 40% respectively.

Table 3.3
Previous Enrollment and Withdrawal from Special Sessions Courses

Question		Yes		No	
		N	%	N	%
29.	Attended Spring/Summer before	180	43.1	238	56.9
30.	Dropped Spring/Summer course[a]	42	18.5	183	80.6
36.	Personal reasons	23	57.5	17	42.5
33.	Insufficient time for reading	22	53.7	19	46.3
37.	Other reasons	17	44.7	21	55.3
32.	Pace was too fast	16	42.1	22	57.9
31.	Course was too difficult	16	40.0	24	60.0
35.	Didn't meet expectations	7	18.4	31	81.6
34.	Too much competition for course resources	3	7.9	35	92.1

[a]This question had a "don't remember" category which received 2 responses

Overall, it appears that students are highly motivated to maintain registration in spring/summer for specific academic reasons related to their degree pursuits.

Part III -- Summer Session Experiences

This section of the survey examined student experiences related to course administration, access to resources, other experiences, and pre-session study. Results reported in Tables 3.4 to 3.7 are in decreasing order of the mean ratings of agreement. A 5-point Likert scale was used for responses, but for ease of reporting, Disagree and Strongly Disagree responses are grouped together as "D," Agree and Strongly Agree are grouped together as "A," with "N" representing the Neutral or No Opinion. Both the number of responses and the percentages are shown in the tables.

Administration. Table 3.4 shows responses relating to experiences with administrative issues (e.g., scheduling, timetabling, registration) in the 1988 Summer Session.

Table 3.4
Student Experiences with Administration of Courses

Question		Agree		Neutral		Disagree	
	Mean	N	%	N	%	N	%
40. Registration satisfactory	4.21	380	91.6	17	4.1	18	4.3
53. Morning is appropriate	4.12	349	84.1	48	11.6	18	4.4
38. Information available	4.05	350	84.3	40	9.6	25	6.0
39. Information complete	3.75	290	69.9	67	16.1	58	13.9
49. 3 weeks appropriate / 3 credit	3.68	306	73.4	31	7.4	80	19.2
45. More courses offered	3.67	227	54.8	145	35.0	42	10.2
42. Timelines for change appropriate	3.67	262	63.4	107	25.9	44	10.7
41. Effective resolution of problems	3.62	227	55.1	159	38.6	26	6.3
57. Afternoon is appropriate for labs	3.25	131	31.4	248	59.6	37	8.9
56. Morning appropriate for labs	3.17	115	27.7	236	56.7	65	15.6
43. Total cost reasonable	3.13	203	49.0	79	19.1	132	31.9
46. More non-program offerings	2.96	61	14.6	283	67.9	73	17.5
54. Afternoon is appropriate	2.86	129	31.2	124	30.0	161	38.9
44. Sufficient variety of offerings	2.83	144	34.7	89	21.4	182	43.9
58. Evening appropriate for lab	2.68	51	12.2	224	53.8	141	33.9
50. 6 weeks appropriate/3 credit	2.62	101	24.4	99	23.9	214	51.6
55. Evening is appropriate	2.58	111	26.7	86	20.6	220	52.7
51. Prefer a different format	2.57	57	13.8	155	37.5	201	48.7
48. Conflicts prevented reg.	2.50	79	19.1	97	23.5	237	57.4
47. Scheduling conflicts a problem	2.44	75	18.0	94	22.6	247	59.4
52. Class times too long	2.29	50	12.0	77	18.5	289	69.4
59. Weekends should be included	1.54	20	4.8	22	5.3	374	89.9

As can be seen from Table 3.4, the highest mean score (4.21) under Administration was question 40, "Registration procedures for Summer Session were satisfactory." Other questions which

confirmed that same experience for students were questions 38 and 39, "Information on Summer Session course offerings was readily available and complete" (M=4.05 and 3.75 respectively). Students evidently were satisfied with information and registration for summer courses.

Questions about the scheduling of courses also received high mean scores (a high consensus of agree-strongly agree). Most students (84.1%) felt that morning was an appropriate time for classes (Q.53, M=4.12) as compared to either afternoon (Q.54, M=2.86) or evening (Q. 55, M=2.58).) Seventy three percent expressed agreement that 3 weeks was an appropriate duration for a 3 credit course (Q.49, M=3.68).

Two other questions provide data for decision-makers about scheduling issues. Numbers 44 and 45 queried student experiences about the number and variety of course offerings. Specifically, 227 students (54.8%) agreed that more program related courses should have been offered during Summer Session (Q.45). And when asked whether a sufficient variety of courses was offered in the Summer (Q.44), only 144 students (34.7%) agreed.

Yet it is clear from the data that students are specific in their administrative requests. Question 46 asked whether Summer Session should have offered more non-program related courses. The majority of respondents (67.9%) replied "no opinion or neutral"; thus indicating that when given a choice for course variety of a program or non-program nature, students preferred program related courses (Q.44 and 45).

Although students would like more course variety and a greater number of courses related to their program areas, they are generally satisfied with administrative matters relating to Summer Session and reported few items of significant concern. However, the number and type of courses could be reconsidered in planning future sessions.

Access to Resources. Students also rated their experiences regarding access to resources, including library, bookstore, laboratories, food services, instructors, and course related materials. Table 3.5 shows responses to this section of the questionnaire.

Overall, students perceived accessibility and availability of most resources at the University during Summer Session as relatively satisfactory. Those questions which received the lowest mean scores were Q.69, "Access to general academic counselling was reasonable" (M=3.10), Q.65, "Access to reference materials was limited by competition" (M=3.05), and Q.68, "Access to computer facilities was reasonable" (M=3.02). These mean scores are a result of a large percentage of neutral or no opinion responses (74.5%, 43.7% and 80.4% respectively). Thus, it can be inferred that these resources were probably not an integral component of summer courses for students surveyed.

Table 3.5
Student Experiences Regarding Access to Resources during Summer

Question		Agree		Neutral		Disagree	
	Mean	N	%	N	%	N	%
61. Library resources available	3.73	291	69.8	89	21.3	37	8.9
62. Bookstore hours adequate	3.60	282	67.6	73	17.5	62	14.9
71. Access to food services adequate	3.58	249	59.8	129	31.0	38	9.1
66. Instructor access reasonable	3.51	232	55.8	134	32.2	50	12.0
64. Supplementary materials avail.	3.48	216	52.1	155	37.3	44	10.6
60. Library hours adequate	3.44	247	59.3	90	21.6	80	19.2
63. Course text available	3.42	268	64.4	49	11.8	99	23.8
70. General admin. services adequate	3.41	227	54.6	126	30.3	63	15.1
67. Lab facilities sufficient	3.15	77	18.6	320	77.3	17	4.1
69. Academic counselling reasonable	3.10	73	17.5	311	74.9	31	7.5
65. Competition - reference material	3.05	122	29.4	181	43.7	111	26.8
68. Computer facilities reasonable	3.02	49	11.9	332	80.4	32	7.7

Resources and services such as library, bookstore, food services are important factors in educational institutions, especially for full-time students who may be spending many hours on or near campus in pursuit of academic endeavors. And access to instructors and other course materials is critical when a term is only three weeks in duration.

Other Experiences. Questions 72-79 explored student perceptions of other experiences during Summer Session enrollment. Results are reported in Table 3.6.

Students were most satisfied with the class size (Q.72, M=3.95), mix of lecture and group discussion (Q.79, M=3.55), and pace of the course (Q.76, M=3.51). There was no strong opinion expressed about compatibility between course length and workload (Q.75, M=3.39), time available for exam preparation (Q.77, M=3.26), and amount of time for background reading (Q.73, M=3.15). Evidently the 3 week format was not totally satisfactory to all students as evidenced by the above responses.

Table 3.6
Other Experiences Relating to Summer Enrollment

Question		Agree		Neutral		Disagree	
	Mean	N	%	N	%	N	%
72. Class size appropriate	3.95	360	86.5	31	7.5	25	6.0
79. Mixture of lecture & discussion	3.55	254	61.1	86	20.7	76	18.3
76. Course pace appropriate	3.51	280	67.3	50	12.0	86	20.7
78. Sufficient interaction	3.45	243	58.4	99	23.8	74	17.8
74. Assignment timelines okay	3.34	216	51.9	119	28.6	81	19.5
75. Workload & length okay	3.39	267	64.3	40	9.6	108	26.0
77. Exam prep. time reasonable	3.26	228	54.8	66	15.9	122	29.3
73. Reading time reasonable	3.15	207	49.8	72	17.3	137	32.9

Pre-Session Study Information

The survey asked three questions about pre-session study:

-- Was the process for acquiring pre-session study materials appropriate?

-- Was the prescribed pre-session study worthwhile?

-- Would your current course have benefitted from pre-session study ?

Responses are reported in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7
Pre-session Study

Question		Agree		Neutral		Disagree	
	Mean	N	%	N	%	N	%
81. Prescribed pre-study worthwhile	3.43	35	53.8	20	30.8	10	15.4
80. Study material acquisition o.k.	3.22	29	45.3	21	32.8	14	21.9
82. Courses should have had pre-study	2.86	123	33.3	82	22.2	164	44.4

Very few courses required pre-session study as a component of registration as evidenced by the low number of responses to questions 80 and 81 (N=64 and 65 respectively). But when queried about the benefit of pre-session study, 33.3% of respondents reported agreement,

whereas 44.4% responded that pre-session study would have been beneficial for the course they were taking. Could this be due to the fact that the majority of students were either on "holiday" or otherwise occupied during the time immediately preceding summer session and would not wish to spend time studying before the actual commencement of courses?

Focus Group Interviews

As discussed in an earlier chapter, focus group interviews were conducted to explore in-depth student experiences about summer enrollment. The following comments and suggestions represent general issues which emerged during the interviews.

General comments.

In Winter Session, you get at least a day between classes to recover

The Summer Session exam schedule can be disruptive for those who work and have families; the times are different from regular class time.

Valuable courses should be taken in Winter Session, not Summer Session.

Summer Session courses get straight to the point.

Expectations of the student in summer session courses are very clear.

It is easier to manage priorities in Summer Session than in Winter Session.

Suggestions.

Base course offerings on a survey of student needs.

Develop a long range plan for summer session course offerings.

Minimize incidences of "TBA" and the use of graduate students for course instructors.

Offer more evening courses in Summer Session.

Offer more graduate level courses in Summer Session.

Offer a greater variety of courses in Summer Session.

Make course outlines available in advance of Summer Session.

Identify course texts prior to Summer Session.

Provide improved access to computers.

Extend assignment due dates beyond the last scheduled day of class.

Eliminate 7:30 a.m. classes.

Offer more lab based science courses in Summer Session.

Overall, students expressed satisfaction with most aspects of Summer Session. The comments and suggestions reflect the findings of the survey instrument.

Summary

The survey findings of students' characteristics, enrollment motivations and program experiences were presented in this chapter. The majority of respondents were full-time undergraduates over 23 years of age, female, and living in Edmonton. The largest group of students were registered in a faculty other than Arts or Education and were taking two courses in Summer Session to speed up degree completion and/or to ease their regular term course load. Overall, there was general satisfaction with administrative factors, access to resources, and course experiences.

In the next chapter, the survey results will be examined analytically in an attempt to identify relationships among the variables.

Chapter 4
Analysis of Background, Enrollment, and Experiences

A major purpose of this study was to ascertain how personal background factors and academic factors would affect students' experiences in summer session. The first section of this chapter examines how background factors (i.e., age, work status, student classification, and faculty affiliation) influence enrollment motivation. The second part focuses on how those background factors affect students' experiences with administration, access to resources and coursework.

The following paragraphs examine the effect of background factors on selected students' enrollment motivations. Four questions under "Reasons for Registration" were omitted from this analysis either because they had low mean responses (see Table 3.2) or because they were not of interest to the administration at the University of Alberta. The number of the survey question is listed to the left.

Background Factors and Enrollment Information

Chi-Square analyses were used to examine the relationships among these variables. Significant findings are noted in the tables at the .05 probability level. Discussion is limited to those relationships which are significant.

For ease of reporting and analyses, some variables were collapsed. Age is reported in three categories: 18-22 years, 23-30 years, and 31 years and over. Hours of work are reported as working, not working, or on leave. Academic classification is categorized as graduate, undergraduate, or other. Faculty status is unchanged from the original instrument and is reported as Arts, Education, Graduate Studies, or other.

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 provide analyses of selected personal and academic characteristics with registration motivations. The **probability** that the responses are independent of each other is provided by the Chi-Square test. In other words, where there is statistical significance, the nature of the response is dependent upon (a result of) the student characteristic.

Table 4.1

Background Factors and Enrollment Information

Reason for Registration	% by Age				% by Work			
	18-22	23-30	>30	Prob	Wkg	On Leave	Not Wkg	Prob
13. Speed up degree completion	66	69	80	.05	69	69	76	NS
14. Pick up dropped course	24	14	6	.01	20	5	16	.01
15. Pick up failed course	10	8	4	NS	9	6	6	NS
17. Ease regular term course load	63	47	46	.01	59	31	59	.01
20. Maintain term continuity	19	20	22	NS	18	11	29	.01
21. Enjoy learning experience	33	42	39	NS	39	31	41	NS
23. Focus attention on 1 course	54	49	35	.01	44	31	58	.01
24. Make up fac./ prog. transfer defic.	14	4	6	.01	10	5	8	NS
25. Make up institution transfer defic.	8	10	5	NS	8	6	8	NS
26. Unable to get course in reg. term	2	4	2	NS	4	2	1	NS
28. Other reasons	22	24	25	NS	23	28	22	NS

Table 4.2

Background Factors and Enrollment Information

Reason for Registration	% by Classification				% by Faculty				
	Grad	Ugrad	Other	Prob	Arts	Educ	Grad	Other	Prob
13. Speed up degree completion	82	77	54	.01	79	75	84	62	.01
14. Pick up dropped course	2	22	1	.01	17	11	0	15	NS
15. Pick up failed course	2	8	8	NS	7	6	0	8	NS
17. Ease regular term course load	38	49	66	.01	48	24	50	68	.01
20. Maintain term continuity	19	22	16	NS	22	15	33	19	NS
21. Enjoy learning experience	30	42	32	NS	45	30	39	35	NS
23. Focus attention on 1 course	44	45	49	NS	46	41	33	50	NS
24. Make up fac./ prog. transfer defic.	2	8	11	NS	13	6	6	5	.05
25. Make up institution transfer defic.	0	9	6	NS	9	8	0	6	NS
26. Unable to get course in reg. term	2	2	4	NS	4	3	0	1	NS
28. Other reasons	29	22	26	NS	27	30	22	18	NS

Note. A detailed technical report of these analyses is available from Special Sessions Office, the University of Alberta.

Age. Students 31 years or over are more likely to report that they registered for summer session courses to speed up their degree completion. Younger students were motivated to register for a summer course to pick up a course they had dropped in the regular term or to ease their course load in the regular term. There is also statistical significance among age groups regarding the attention they focus on one course as a reason for summer registration. Students 18-22 years of age are more likely to take one course and focus attention on that than are older students. These responses suggest that younger students (undergraduates) had greater difficulty with academic requirements in the regular term, perhaps including a heavier course load than older students.

When queried about making up deficiencies as a result of transferring from one faculty to another, greater numbers of younger students than older students indicated this reason was a motivating factor for course registration. Younger students, especially undergraduates, tend to transfer from one program to another as they decide upon a career; most program requirements are not uniform across faculties - thus the need to make up program deficiencies. Also it is conceivable that most older students have a definite career and academic focus when they enroll, with few program transfers during their education.

Work Commitment. Students who reported that they were working were more likely to register for a summer course to pick up a dropped or failed course (presumably from the previous academic term), than were students who were either on leave from their jobs or not working. More students who were not working indicated that maintaining continuity between terms was important for them. This may reflect a need to complete their education as quickly as possible to gain employment.

Classification. As indicated in the literature review, an important reason for attending summer school is to accelerate progress toward a degree. Responses in this study confirm that; more than one-half the students in each classification reported that to speed up degree completion was a primary reason for enrollment. But significantly fewer students who were classified as "other" (audit, special status, unclassified) were motivated by that factor. Presumably these students had not clarified their education goals and may not have been working toward any specific degree. Students who register as unclassified, audit, or special status are often exploring university courses/programs after an absence from formal education. They are "testing the water" to see if they can handle academic wok or wanting the course content without the responsibility of assignments and exams. The University allows a certain number of courses (up to five) to be taken in this manner. These "other" students would thus be motivated to register for summer courses to lighten the regular term course load (and any concomitant stress, uncertainty, requirements) as evidenced in the fairly high response rate (46%) to this question (Q.17).

Faculty. There is a significant relationship between faculty affiliation and registration motivation as reported in this study. Fewer respondents (62%) registered in faculties other than

Arts, Education, or Graduate Studies (79%, 75%, and 84% respectively) indicated degree acceleration was important. Conversely, when asked about easing the regular term course load, more students (68%) in these other faculties (e.g., Business, Engineering, Sciences) reported that as a reason for summer school registration (as compared to Arts, 48%, Education, 24%, and Graduate Studies, 50%). Education majors were least concerned about easing the regular term course load. Whether this reflects something about the nature of the faculty (of Education) or something about the nature of education majors is unclear.

Background Factors and Administrative Experiences

The following tables (4.3 to 4.6) and accompanying discussion were derived from an examination of the crosstabulation analyses and the chi-square statistical test of independence. Responses in Part II and III of the survey instrument were scaled in a 5-point Likert scale of strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). For ease of analysis, the scale was collapsed to three: disagree, neutral, agree. The crosstabulation analyses from these sections yields 3 x 3 or 3 x 4 tables when each question is analyzed by students' background characteristics. The data are not presented due to the complex and detailed nature of these analyses. The measure of association (chi-square) between and among the variables is reported as either NS (not significant) or at the probability level of .05 (indicating that there is a significant relationship) in order that the results will be conceptually meaningful, rather than merely statistical.

Because the chi-square procedure reveals only the existence of statistical significance and not the nature of the significance, it is often difficult to identify the source of significance. In some cases, the significance may be attributed to large differences between the percentages (e. g., 9% to 17%). In other cases, the significance appears to be conceptually meaningful due to the nature of a response (all high or low, a type of consistency or lack thereof, or a clear pattern to the responses). Table 4.3 presents students' experiences with administration.

There were significant differences in students' experiences related to 11 categories: registration procedures, timelines for course changes, total cost, course variety, program related courses, nonprogram related courses, scheduling conflicts as a problem, scheduling conflicts as preventing enrollment, 6-wks is appropriate for 3 credits, class times, and evening offerings.

Table 4.3

Background Factors and Students' Experiences with Administration

Experiences with Administration	Significant by			
	Age	Work	Classfc	Faculty
38. Course Info available	NS	NS	NS	NS
39. Course info complete	NS	NS	NS	NS
40. Satisfactory registration	NS	NS	*	NS
41. Resolution of admin. problems satisfactory	NS	NS	NS	NS
42. Registration change timelines satisfactory	NS	NS	*	NS
43. Reasonable Cost	*	*	NS	NS
44. Sufficient variety of courses	NS	NS	*	*
45. More program related courses	NS	*	*	NS
46. More nonprogram related courses	NS	*	*	NS
47. Scheduling conflicts a problem	*	NS	*	*
48. Scheduling conflicts prevented enrollment	*	NS	*	*
49. 3 wks appropriate for 3 credits	NS	NS	NS	NS
50. 6 wks appropriate for 3 credits	*	NS	*	*
51. Different format preferred	NS	NS	NS	NS
52. Class time too long	NS	NS	*	NS
53. Mornings appropriate for class	NS	NS	NS	NS
54. Afternoons appropriate for class	NS	NS	NS	NS
55. Evenings appropriate for class	NS	*	*	*
56. Weekends should be included	NS	NS	NS	NS

Note. A detailed technical report of these analyses is available from Special Sessions Office, the University of Alberta.

There are no clear patterns to the responses when analyzed by students' personal and academic characteristics, as noted in the table.

Background Factors and Access to Resources

Students' experiences with access to resources are presented in Table 4.4. On every item except two (access to academic counselling and access to food services) there were significant differences across the personal and academic characteristics of respondents.

Table 4.4

Background Factors and Students' Experiences with Access to Resources

Access to resources	Significant by			
	Age	Work	Classifc	Faculty
60. Library hours adequate	NS	NS	*	*
61. Library resources available	NS	NS	*	*
62. Bookstore hrs. adequate	*	NS	NS	*
63. Recommended texts available	NS	NS	*	*
64. Supplementary materials available	NS	NS	*	NS
65. Access to reference material limited	NS	NS	*	*
67. Access to lab facilities okay	*	NS	*	*
68. Access to computer facilities reasonable	*	*	*	*
69. Access to academic counselling okay	NS	NS	NS	NS
70. Access to general admin. services okay	NS	NS	NS	*
71. Access to food services adequate	NS	NS	NS	NS

Note. A detailed technical report of these analyses is available from Special Sessions Office, the University of Alberta.

The chi-square analysis showed significant relationships between faculty affiliation and nine of the items. Evidently, one's faculty affiliation is a strong influence in the degree of satisfaction regarding access to resources. A closer examination of this variable across the responses reveals that there are no clearly discernible patterns of response. Each relationship appears to be unique.

Background Factors and Other Experiences

This section of the instrument explored students' satisfaction about other course-related summer program experiences. As reported in Table 4.5, significant relationships were found among the responses relative to three of the four background characteristics (age, classification, and faculty). No consistent pattern between and among these variables was found. However, an examination of question 75 revealed interesting findings. Question, 75 "The workload was compatible with the length of the course" was significant across age, classification, and faculty.

The crosstabulation analysis shows that students age 31 and over, classified as diploma or graduate students, and registered in the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, disagree with that statement. It is possible that these students think the duration of the course is too brief for the amount of work required; or conversely, that too much work is required for the amount of class time.

Table 4.5

Background Factors and Students' Experiences with Other (class) Experiences

Other Experiences	Significant by			
	Age	Work	Classifc	Faculty
72. Number of students in class appropriate	NS	NS	NS	NS
73. Background reading time reasonable	NS	NS	NS	NS
74. Assignment completion time okay	*	NS	NS	*
75. Workload compatible with course length	*	NS	*	*
77. Exam preparation time reasonable	NS	NS	*	*
78. Opportunity for interaction okay	NS	NS	*	NS
79. Good mix of lecture & discussion	NS	NS	*	NS

Note. A detailed technical report of these analyses is available from Special Sessions Office, the University of Alberta.

Background Factors and Pre-Session Study

Table 4.6 reveals that there were significant differences among students by age, work status, and classification and their course experiences with pre-session study. The data show that there was a pattern across age, hours and classification. When asked whether pre-session study would have been beneficial, those students who were older and/or registered as graduate students were more likely than younger students or undergraduates to agree. Yet students who were working were more likely to disagree that pre-session study would have been beneficial. This may have been due to the fact that such students would be less likely to find the time for pre-session study.

Table 4.6

Background Factors and Students' Experiences with Pre-session Study

Experiences with pre-session study	Significant by			
	Age	Work	Classific	Faculty
80. Process for acquiring pre-sess. study was approp.	NS	NS	NS	NS
81. Pre-session study worthwhile	*	NS	NS	NS
82. Course would have benefitted from pre-sess. study	*	*	*	NS

Note. A detailed technical report of these analyses is available from Special Sessions Office, the University of Alberta.

Summary

This chapter has provided an examination of the relationships among selected variables in this study. Chi-square procedures were used to identify significant relationships among selected student background factors, reasons for summer enrollment and summer school experiences. Conclusions and recommendations drawn from these analyses are presented in the final chapter of this report.

Chapter 5
Summary and Recommendations

This chapter is a summary of the major findings of university students' experiences regarding summer session programming. Recommendations are proposed for future developments in summer session planning and delivery.

This research project was designed to explore the effectiveness of summer session programs from students' perspectives. Data were gathered through a questionnaire distributed to 418 students enrolled in credit courses at the University of Alberta during July and August, 1988. Questions in the instrument focused on background factors, enrollment information, and experiences with several aspects of Summer Session courses. The findings are divided into four sections.

Background Characteristics

Overall, the typical student enrolled in a summer academic program is age 23 or older, female, and residing in Edmonton. She is a full-time undergraduate student who is not working while attending university. She is most likely registered in a faculty other than Arts or Education and had attended the University in the preceding Winter Session. Her experiences during Summer Session are a result of registration in two courses, and are the basis of the recommendations in this chapter.

Enrollment Information

The two most popular reasons for Summer Session registration were to speed up degree completion and to ease course load during the regular session. Students who were older and at the graduate level (> 31 years of age) were more likely than younger students to attend summer school to accelerate degree completion, while younger students (18-22 years) in faculties other than Arts and Education reported that they registered to ease the regular term course load. There was an almost even division between those who had attended Spring/Summer previously and those who were attending for the first time. Most students do not drop a course in the summer.

Experiences in Summer Session

Students are generally satisfied with Summer Session programming. They prefer morning classes, would like more program-related courses, and a greater variety of courses. They also reported favorably about access to library resources, the bookstore, food services, and instructors.

The majority of students are relatively satisfied with their course-related experiences, but there is not a high degree of satisfaction on any one aspect. And a large proportion of students thought pre-session study materials would have been appropriate for the course(s) they took.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the findings in this study and from a review of the literature.

1. Because students want more program related courses and a greater variety, departments and faculties should attempt to expand their offerings. A survey of students would be one way to determine the types of courses wanted.

2. Since the majority of respondents reported a desire to accelerate degree completion, greater efforts should be made to expand the delivery of courses. Several suggestions are:

-- Increase the use of distance delivery (even local students could benefit from this delivery mode).
-- Expand the scheduling of courses (e.g., more early morning classes).
-- Consider non-traditional formats like intense week, weekend, or two week classes (or a mini semester between the First and Second Terms of Winter Session or between the Second Term of Winter Session and Spring Session).

3. Encourage department administrators and faculty members to plan and offer courses with a pre-session study component. This could be more than reading and/or assignments. It could include a pre-session class meeting, audio-visual learning materials, library activities, or other integrative components.

4. Since the majority of students are mature adults, offer professional development for instructors in the planning and delivery of instruction to adults. This would include teaching methodologies appropriate to adult learners.

5. Initiate systematic evaluation of Spring and Summer Sessions to establish a database for planning. Include administrators, faculty members, and students.

6. The University should undertake a study of the nature and scope of summer programming in order to develop policies and procedures where appropriate.

Conclusion

Courses in the summer are an important component of a student's academic program. Increasing the effectiveness of these offerings is important for universities as they continue to strive for excellence and quality in programming and services. Receiving and responding to students' expectations and experiences can go a long way to increasing the effectiveness of summer programming.

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Appendices

Appendix A

List of Departments participating in the Study

List of Departments Participating in the Study

Department of Adult, Career and Technology Education
Department of Classics
Department of Economics
Department of Educational Administration
Department of Educational Psychology
Department of Elementary Education
Department of Geography
Department of History
Department of Music
Department of Political Science
Department of Psychology
Department of Religious Studies
Department of Sociology

Appendix B

Survey Instrument

University of Alberta
Edmonton
Canada T6G 2G5

Department of Industrial and Vocational Education
Faculty of Education
633 Education Building South, Telephone (403) 432-3678

SUMMER SESSION LEARNING EXPERIENCES
AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
(To Accompany the Questionnaire)

On a random basis, your class group was chosen to be part of a study of student learning experiences in the Summer Session at the University of Alberta. The study is funded by the Western Association of Summer Session Administrators and is endorsed by the Special Sessions Office of the University of Alberta -- the office responsible for organizing and coordinating spring and summer courses. This study is intended to provide an overall sense of student learning experiences during the Summer Session. This study is not a course evaluation; it is a more broadly-based examination of the Summer Session format from a student perspective.

Your involvement in completing this questionnaire is entirely voluntary.

A report based on the data resulting from the interview will be made available to the Western Association of Summer Session Administrators and the University of Alberta Special Sessions Office. Findings may also be published in scholarly and/or discipline journals. In reporting, the anonymity of you and your course will be respected. Neither you nor your course will be identified in any reports of this study. Information will be reported in aggregated form only, or by use of pseudonyms. To ensure confidentiality, all questionnaire and interview materials will be kept in a secure location. Original data will be available only to the project researchers, none of whom have any connection with your course, nor are they in a position to evaluate your performance as a student.

If you have questions or concerns about the project, please feel free to ask the researcher distributing and/or collecting the questionnaires, or contact any of the following researchers involved in the project:

Dr. Paula Brook	Dept. of Industrial and Vocational Education	- 7949
Dr. Don Chapman	Dept. of Industrial and Vocational Education	- 7949
Dr. Peter Wright	Dept. of Industrial and Vocational Education	- 5363

PLEASE KEEP THIS PAGE FOR YOUR OWN REFERENCE

SUMMER SESSION SURVEY

1 2 3 4 5
1/6

The purpose of this survey is to gather information as part of a research project entitled Summer Session Learning Experiences at the University of Alberta. As a Summer Session student, your cooperation in completing this questionnaire will be appreciated.

Participation in the survey and / or responses to individual questions is voluntary. The return of the completed questionnaire will be interpreted as consent to participate. To ensure anonymity, please do not identify yourself on the questionnaire. **Involvement in this project has no bearing on the evaluation of your performance in this course.**

Please ignore the numbers in the column on the far right.

PART I - BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The following questions address the background of students attending Summer Session. Please respond by circling the number of the appropriate response.

Demographics

1. My age group is 7

   1. 18-22
   2. 23-30
   3. 31-40
   4. 41-50
   5. over 50

2. My gender is 8

   1. male
   2. female

3. My permanent residence is 9

   1. within the city of Edmonton
   2. outside Edmonton but within commuting distance of the University of Alberta
   3. outside Edmonton and beyond commuting distance of the University of Alberta

4. My current occupation or career relates primarily to 10

   1. teaching
   2. government
   3. business or industry
   4. student
   5. homemaker
   6. other (please specify) _____

5. How much time do you commit to your employment while you are attending this Summer Session 11

   1. 35 hours or more per week on average
   2. between 20 and 35 hours per week on average
   3. between 1 and 20 hours per week on average
   4. none - I am on vacation or leave
   5. none - I am not currently employed

Academic Information

6. This Summer Session, I am registered as 12

1. a graduate student
2. a visiting graduate student
3. a diploma student
4. an undergraduate student
5. a visiting undergraduate student
6. a special student
7. an unclassified student
8. an auditor

7. Currently, I am registered in the Faculty of 13

1. Arts
2. Education
3. Graduate Studies & Research
4. Other (please specify) _____

8. During the period January - April 1988, my registration status at the University of Alberta was 14

1. full-time
2. part-time
3. not registered

9. During **Spring Session** 1988, the number of **3 credit** courses I was registered for was 15

1. none
2. one
3. two
4. more than two

10. During **Summer Session** 1988, the number of **3 credit** courses I am registered for is 16

1. none
2. one
3. two
4. more than two

11. During **Spring Session** 1988, the number of **6 credit** courses I was registered for was 17

1. none
2. one
3. two
4. more than two

12. During **Summer Session** 1988, the number of **6 credit** courses I am registered for is 18

1. none
2. one
3. two
4. more than two

PART II - ENROLLMENT INFORMATION

The following questions relate to enrollment in Summer Session. Please respond to all questions by circling the appropriate answer.

I registered for a course (or courses) this Summer Session

13.	to speed up completion of my degree	1. yes	2. no	19
14.	to pick up a dropped course	1. yes	2. no	20
15.	to pick up a course that I failed	1. yes	2. no	21
16.	to take a course that was only offered at this time	1. yes	2. no	22
17.	to ease my course load during the regular session	1. yes	2. no	23
18.	because I expected the class size to be small	1. yes	2. no	24
19.	to get a particular instructor	1. yes	2. no	25
20.	to maintain continuity between regular sessions	1. yes	2. no	26
21.	because I enjoy the Summer Session learning experience	1. yes	2. no	27
22.	to take a course which was not required for my program	1. yes	2. no	28
23.	to be able to focus all of my attention on a certain course or courses	1. yes	2. no	29
24.	to make up program deficiencies incurred as a result of transferring from one faculty or program at the University of Alberta to another	1. yes	2. no	30
25.	to make up program deficiencies incurred as a result of transferring from another institution to the University of Alberta	1. yes	2. no	31
26.	because I was unable to gain entrance to this course during the regular session	1. yes	2. no	32
27.	to take a course from a visiting professor	1. yes	2. no	33
28.	for reasons not listed here	1. yes	2. no	34

The following questions relate to enrollment in previous Spring or Summer Sessions. Please respond by circling the appropriate answer.

29.	Have you attended Spring or Summer Session courses at the University of Alberta prior to 1988	1. yes	2. no	35

If you answered "no" to question 29, skip to PART III on page 4

30. Have you ever dropped a University of Alberta Spring or Summer Session course 36
    1. yes
    2. no
    3. I don't remember

If you answered "no", or "don't remember" to question 30, skip to PART III on page 4

The following questions relate to the reasons why you dropped a previous Spring or Summer Session course.

I dropped a previous U. of A. Spring or Summer Session course

31.	because the course was too difficult / demanding	1. yes	2. no	37
32.	because the pace of the course was too fast	1. yes	2. no	38
33.	because there was insufficient time for indepth reading / analysis	1. yes	2. no	39
34.	because there was too much competition for course related resources	1. yes	2. no	40
35.	because the course didn't meet my expectations	1. yes	2. no	41
36.	for personal reasons	1. yes	2. no	42
37.	for reasons not listed here	1. yes	2. no	43

PART III - EXPERIENCES WITH SUMMER SESSION 1988

The statements in this section refer to your experiences as a student in Summer Session. Please circle the number which expresses the extent to which you agree with the statement. Use the following scale.

(sd)	(d)	(n)	(a)	(sa)
1 strongly disagree	2 disagree	3 no opinion or neutral	4 agree	5 strongly agree

DUP 1-5 2 6

Administration of Summer Session courses

		(sd)	(d)	(n)	(a)	(sa)	
38.	Information on Summer Session course offerings was readily available	1	2	3	4	5	7
39.	Information on Summer Session course offerings was complete	1	2	3	4	5	8
40.	Registration procedures for Summer Session were satisfactory	1	2	3	4	5	9
41.	Resolution of administrative problems was effective	1	2	3	4	5	10
42.	Timelines for registration changes (e.g., adding, changing, dropping courses) were appropriate	1	2	3	4	5	11
43.	The total cost of attending Summer Session was reasonable	1	2	3	4	5	12
44.	A sufficient variety of courses was offered this Summer Session	1	2	3	4	5	13
45.	Summer Session should have offered more courses related to my program	1	2	3	4	5	14

		(sd)	(d)	(n)	(a)	(sa)	
466.	Summer Session should have offered more non-program related courses	1	2	3	4	5	15
477.	Course scheduling conflicts were a problem for me this Summer Session	1	2	3	4	5	16
488.	Course scheduling conflicts prevented me from taking a preferred course	1	2	3	4	5	17
499.	In Summer Session, three weeks is an appropriate duration for a 3 credit course	1	2	3	4	5	18
500.	In Summer Session, six weeks is an appropriate duration for a 3 credit course	1	2	3	4	5	19
511.	I would prefer a different format for Summer Session than is presently available	1	2	3	4	5	20
522.	Summer Session class times are too long	1	2	3	4	5	21
533.	The morning is an appropriate time to conduct Summer Session **classes**	1	2	3	4	5	22
544.	The afternoon is an appropriate time to conduct Summer Session **classes**	1	2	3	4	5	23
555.	The evening (5:00 p.m. or later) is an appropriate time to conduct Summer Session **classes**	1	2	3	4	5	24
566.	The morning is an appropriate time to conduct Summer Session **labs**	1	2	3	4	5	25
577.	The afternoon is an appropriate time to conduct Summer Session **labs**	1	2	3	4	5	26
588.	The evening (5:00 p.m. or later) is an appropriate time to conduct Summer Session **labs**	1	2	3	4	5	27
599.	Weekends should be included in the scheduling of Summer Session classes	1	2	3	4	5	28

<u>Access to resources during Summer Session</u>

600.	Library hours of operation were adequate	1	2	3	4	5	29
611.	Library resources were generally available	1	2	3	4	5	30
622.	Book Store hours of operation were adequate	1	2	3	4	5	31
633.	Recommended course texts were available when required	1	2	3	4	5	32
644.	Supplementary course materials were available when required	1	2	3	4	5	33
655.	Access to course related reference materials was limited by competition	1	2	3	4	5	34
666.	Access to instructors out of class time was reasonable	1	2	3	4	5	35
677.	Access to course laboratory facilities was sufficient	1	2	3	4	5	36
688.	Access to computer facilities was reasonable	1	2	3	4	5	37
699.	Access to general academic counselling was reasonable	1	2	3	4	5	38
700.	Access to general administrative services (e.g., relative to parking, registration, fees, enquiries) was adequate	1	2	3	4	5	39
711.	Access to cafeteria / food services was adequate	1	2	3	4	5	40

Other experiences

		(sd)	(d)	(n)	(a)	(sa)	
72.	The number of students in the class was appropriate	1	2	3	4	5	41
73.	Time available for background reading was reasonable	1	2	3	4	5	42
74.	Time available for completion of assignments was reasonable	1	2	3	4	5	43
75.	The workload was compatible with the length of the course	1	2	3	4	5	44
76.	The pace of the course was appropriate	1	2	3	4	5	45
77.	The time available to prepare for exams was reasonable	1	2	3	4	5	46
78.	There was enough opportunity to interact with fellow students	1	2	3	4	5	47
79.	There was a good mix of lecture and group discussion	1	2	3	4	5	48

If the course you are taking did not require pre-session study, please proceed to question 82

80.	The process for acquiring the prescribed pre-session study materials was appropriate	1	2	3	4	5	49
81.	The prescribed pre-session study was worthwhile	1	2	3	4	5	50
82.	The course I am now taking would have benefited from pre-sesion study	1	2	3	4	5	51

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION.

Appendix C

1. Information Letter to Faculty Members
2. Letter from Director of Special Sessions

University of Alberta
Edmonton

Special Sessions Office
Faculty of Extension

Canada T6G 2G5

4-107 Education II, Telephone (403) 432-3752

TO: Selected Instructors in Summer Session 1988

DATE: June 16, 1988

FROM: K.L. Carswell, Director
Special Sessions
Faculty of Extension

RE: Study on Summer Session Learning Experiences at the University of Alberta

I am writing to request your support for the study on Summer Session Learning Experiences at the University of Alberta.

This study has the full support of the Special Sessions Office and the results of the study will be of significant importance to future planning for the Spring and Summer Sessions.

Your cooperation is most appreciated.

Sincerely,

KLC/av

University of Alberta
Edmonton
Canada T6G 2G5

Department of Industrial and Vocational Education
Faculty of Education
633 Education Building South, Telephone (403) 432-3678

June 29, 1988

Dear Colleague:

A research project examining student learning experiences in Summer Session is being conducted by three researchers in the Department of Industrial and Vocational Education. **Your class has been randomly selected for inclusion in this study.** The study is funded by the Western Association of Summer Session Administrators, is endorsed by the Director of Special Sessions at the University of Alberta (see attached), and has been approved by the Faculty of Educational Research Ethics Review Committee.

The study is not a course evaluation; it is a broad-based exploratory survey of the Summer Session format from a student perspective. A final report will be made available to the funding agency and the Special Sessions office. This information will also be available to you upon request.

We are seeking your approval to visit your class on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday of the last week (before any final examination), to administer the instrument. This will take approximately thirty minutes of class time.

We will be contacting you in the near future to arrange a time and date for the class visit. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please feel free to telephone any of the following:

Paula Ann Brook	7949	Peter Wright	5363
Don Chapman	7949		

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Paula Ann Brook
Assistant Professor

PAB/rm
encl.

Appendix D

Student Volunteer Form

SUMMER SESSION LEARNING EXPERIENCES (Term 2)
AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
(Interview Volunteer Form)

In addition to completion of the questionnaire, we are today seeking volunteers who would be prepared to participate in one group interview after the completion of your course. Each volunteer will be involved in only one interview. The interview will take place in a group format, not to exceed ten students. Each group interview is expected to take about two hours.

Although we intend to interview only a set number of students, we encourage as many students as possible to volunteer. If we are fortunate enough to receive more volunteers than required, a random selection process -- taking into account availability -- will be used to identify those who will participate.

Aside from our direct research interest, we anticipate that the interview participants may benefit from the group interview, by sharing ideas and experiences with your peers.

If you are interested in volunteering, please complete the following section and return the completed sheet to the researcher now. Please remember, volunteering at this point does not commit you to participate. We will be telephoning you in the near future to confirm arrangements. At any point, you may decide to withdraw from the study.

++

For planning purposes, we have set aside the following potential dates for group interviews. In the Choice column, please indicate your most-preferred (1) and least-preferred (2) meeting times.

	Date	Time	Place	Choice
A.	Mon. Aug. 15	7:00-9:00 pm	Rm. 645 Ed. South	_____
B.	Tues. Aug. 16	1:00-3:00 pm	Rm. 645 Ed. South	_____

Please Print

Name _____

Course _____

Phone No.

Employment _____ Work time _____

Home _____ Available _____

Comments:_____

_____

Appendix E

Interview Consent Form

Student Agreement to Participate as Interviewee

SUMMER SESSION LEARNING EXPERIENCES
AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

The study of Summer Session learning experiences at the University of Alberta, and the interview arrangements have been explained to me. I have had an opportunity to ask questions. I have read the description, understand it, and voluntarily consent to participate in this study. I also understand that I have the right to opt out of this study at any time.

Signature of Participant Date